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CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
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Initial Reports of States Parties

BURKINA FASO

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INTRODUCTION

1. The history of Burkina Faso shows how women have had to play a significant role in its political life. Great female political figures such as Djimbi OUATTARA and Princess YENNEGA were called on to join the struggle for freedom (one in the Kingdom of Guérico and the other in the Kingdom of Mossi), which marks the history of Upper Volta, now Burkina Faso.

2. With the advent of the People's Democratic Revolution on 4 August 1983, the political authorities, recognizing the value of women, decided to bring them into all forms of the struggle against the various shackles imposed by society. This is why it is stated in the Declaration of Political Orientation (DPO) of 2 October 1983 that "Revolution and the liberation of women go hand in hand". To achieve this, it is necessary "to create a new mentality among Burkina Faso women enabling them to take their place alongside men in the destiny of the country". The ultimate aim of the Revolution is "to build a free and prosperous society where women will be equal with men in all domains".

3. This declaration has been progressively translated into action by political measures to favour the social and economic promotion of women.

I. VARIOUS MEASURES AND ACTION UNDERTAKEN AS PART OF THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN BURKINA FASO

4. Burkina Faso signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and ratified it by Decree No. 84-468/CNR/PRES/REC of 28 November 1984, and by Order No. 84-77/CNR/PRES of 28 November 1984.

5. In implementing this Convention, several organizational and institutional measures have been taken, more especially within:

- The political context
- The legal context
- The social welfare and health context
- The education and employment context.

A. Political context

6. There have been a number of measures and activities at the political level, including:

- The introduction in 1984 of national community service without distinction of sex;
- Nomination of women to senior political and administrative posts.

7. A survey carried out in 1987 by the Ministry of Family Welfare and National Solidarity to identify women occupying such posts indicates the following results:

- 5 Ministers: Ministries of Public Health; Family Welfare and National Solidarity; Environment and Tourism; Budget, and Culture.
- 3 High Commissioners and several Prefects.

- 5 Ambassadors: in the Federal Republic of Germany, Mali, China, Nigeria, and Ghana.

8. From 1988 to 1989 there were:

- 4 women, respectively, in the Ministries of:
  - Financial Resources
  - Culture
  - Information
  - Primary Education and Mass Literacy (MEBAM).
- 1 woman High Commissioner in charge of the Province of Nahouri (Pô).
- 1 Ambassadress of Burkina Faso to Denmark.
- Many women as chiefs of services, and finally women elected to the position of alternates to the National Union of the Elderly of Burkina Faso (UNAB), the National Union of Young People of Burkina Faso (UNJB), and the Provincial Revolutionary authorities.
- The establishment of the Department for the Mobilization and Organization of Women (DMOF) within the National Secretariat General for the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (SGN/CDR) in 1984, now the National Co-ordinator for the People's Organizations and Revolutionary Committee (CNSP/CR). Action undertaken by the DMOF led to the establishment of the Union of Women of Burkina Faso (UFB) on 19 September 1985. This structure is intended to mobilize women and heighten their awareness. It is working towards the political, economic and social advancement of Burkina Faso women.
- The organization of a national week, from 1 to 8 March 1985, by the political authorities of the country brought together hundreds of women from all parts of the country belonging to a variety of social categories, to discuss their specific problems, make recommendations, for example, on the access of women to education and employment without distinction of sex, and such like.

9. In order to heighten public awareness of women's problems, 8 March was declared an official paid holiday.

- As part of the plan to raise the political level of women, which is considered low compared with that of men, the political authorities of our country organized in 1987 an operation entitled: "Operation Pountoua" (Light). Its purpose was to provide political education in national vernaculars for 119 women instructors and for some 4,000 women from all over the country.
- In order to facilitate the implementation of programmes of benefit to women, and to work towards greater economic advancement of women, certain services were established and a number of others restructured. Such was the case with the Ministries of National Education and Rural Affairs, which became the Ministry of Primary Education and Mass Literacy (MEBAM) and the Ministry of Rural Co-operative Action (MACP). A further example was the fusion of the Department for Family Economy into a single Department for the Promotion of the Family.

10. The Department of Mother and Child became the Department of Family Health in the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. This Department works in the area of family planning. The action is aimed at allowing parents the choice of planning and spacing the birth of their children or jointly choosing their method of contraception.

B. Legal context

11. Legislation governing the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women concerns essentially the following points:

- Concerned to achieve equality of access to land and farming activities by women, Burkina Faso adopted an agricultural and agrarian reform under order No. 84-050/CNR/PRES of 4 August 1984, governing agricultural and agrarian re-organization in Burkina Faso and its executive provisions. This legislation confers on women the same status of farmer as on men.

- With regard to family allowances, Burkina Faso signed Kiti (decree) No. 86-108/CNR/PRES/TSS/FP of 19 March 1986, which introduces changes into legislation governing family allowances. The provisions of article 10 of decree No. 202/FP/P of 19 November 1959 containing regulations for remuneration, allowances and other material benefits for civil servants have thus been amended.

12. As a result, these allowances would be available to:

- A married female civil servant whose spouse is not earning;

- A female civil servant who is not married but who is in fact responsible for her children.

- The restructuring of the judicial system with the setting up of people's conciliation courts (TPC) and people's departmental courts (TPD) since 1987 has brought more transparency and equality in the administration of justice by replacing the customary courts; these were often biased towards men to the detriment of women, since throughout most of our society, customary law does not recognize the true value of women.

- In order to achieve justice and equality before the law, since all citizens of Burkina Faso are now equal in this respect, the new legal code governing individuals and the family was officially adopted on 9 November 1988. It will come into force on 4 August 1990.

13. The new legislation recognizes the equality of sexes and enables a woman to enjoy a status comparable to that of her spouse. It entitles women to parental authority on the basis of equality between spouses, and also to the mutual consent of the future spouses in the case of marriage.

C. Social welfare and health context

14. The health and welfare of the population as a whole and women in particular is one of the major concerns of the political officials in Burkina Faso. Ceaseless efforts are therefore being made in this area. These include:

- The adoption by Burkina Faso of a family planning policy under Zatu (law) No. AN-IV/008/CNR/MEF-SN of 24 October 1986, as a contribution to family welfare. This policy is the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.

15. This policy is intended to make the general public more aware of the problem of having children as well as family and individual sexual relations. It also aims at eliminating all the problems related to large families, multiple and frequent pregnancies, the high rate of maternal and infant mortality, and unwanted pregnancies leading to clandestine abortion or infanticide, all of which inhibit the socio-economic development of the country, with women being the greatest losers.

- The adoption by the State Secretariat for Social Welfare of strategies to combat enforced prostitution by the creation of a national commission on 6 February 1990, and regulations aimed at preventing minors from frequenting drinking establishments, are measures designed to safeguard the standing of women, and preserve and protect their health.

- As part of the struggle against traditional practices affecting the health and development of women and children, an ad hoc committee to combat the practice of excision was set up in 1988 by the State Secretariat for Social Welfare. The committee comes under the State Secretariat for Social Welfare and is engaged in establishing a national structure, to include governmental and non-governmental organizations, women's associations and public bodies.

16. The committee is working on an intensive programme to increase public awareness of the harmfulness of excision with a view to gradually abolishing the practice, with the aid of posters, leaflets, a promotional guide and a recently-made film entitled "My daughter won't be be excised".

17. Also under the sponsorship of the State Secretariat for Social Welfare, and in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, a project entitled "Project BKF/76/P02" was initiated in June 1983, with the support of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA). The project permitted the creation of the basic structures responsible for health and promotional activities meeting the needs of the rural population. In 1989, 549 traditional midwives, 399 trainers and 66 counsellors were trained under this project as part of the social welfare and health policy of Burkina Faso.

D. Economic context

18. Under its policy of building a new, fairer and more egalitarian society, based on effective participation by the population at large in the development process, the Popular Front has assigned to the State Secretariat for Social Welfare the task of promoting the economic role of women.

19. The economic advancement of women, which is an integral part of the overall process of family promotion, will take the form of specific action for the benefit of women. Hence the creation of the Department for Promotion of the Family in 1987.

20. This Department is working for the socio-economic advancement of women through a number of services, in particular the Service for the Economic Advancement of Women.

21. Under the heading of the economic advancement of women, we can point to income-generating activities initiated for women, such as:

- The Godé cloth mill in 1987, which brings together 40 weavers for the production of local Faso Dan-Fani cloth.

- The tomato project, which began in 1987, trained three women in techniques for the preservation and processing of tomatoes and other fruit and vegetables (mango and orange juice, onions and pepper) as well as cereals (fonio).

- The project covers 80 women in the provinces of Kadiogo, Houet du Bulkiemdé and Comoé. Thirty-four thousand tons of fresh tomatoes were processed in 1988.

- The enrolment of women's groups in the cottage-industry, in agriculture, trade and so on.

- To relieve the burden of women's housework, and to enable women to improve their production, the State Secretariat for Social Welfare has provided flour-mills for women's groups in villages, as well as karité presses and multipurpose carts.

22. This policy of relief is intended to ensure more free time for women still stuck in their traditional roles to engage in remunerative activities. The approach adopted in the case of the mills is to enable women to gradually take over the job of miller, as well as the self-management of smaller economic enterprises still jealously guarded by men.

- A project for installing 1,000 mills is also in progress. It is sponsored by the Union of Women of Burkina Faso (UFB). A national commission is working towards this end. With regard to handicrafts, a project called "Project Craftswomen" under the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has helped to train 500 women in the fields of basket-making, pottery and weaving.

E. Education context

23. Education statistics reveal a gap in the school attendance rate between males and females. This gap is due to several factors, namely:

- The preference of parents to send boys to school rather than girls.

- Premature school leaving among girls due to unwanted pregnancies or lack of staff.

24. As an example, in 1985-1986, there were 916 girls with scholarships as compared with 3,441 boys, or 52.15 per cent of the young people admitted to the primary schools, as against 48.27 per cent girls in public and private establishments.

25. To reduce the gap between men and women, the following action has been undertaken for the benefit of women:

- Operation Alpha-Commando, under which rural men and women were taught to read and write. The operation was carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock in 1985.

26. Four thousand women learned to read and write during this operation.

- The organization of a second intensive literacy campaign for women in the country from 8 February to 8 April 1988 in 10 national languages. This operation known as "Bantaare" means in the fulfuldé language "growth or advancement to a higher and better state" and it was intended to remedy the

outcome of the first one (Alpha-Commando), in which only 1 per cent of women took part. The operation was carried out by the Ministry of Rural Co-operatives. In the course of it 13,000 women learned to read and write.

27. In 1988, the Burkina Pedagogical Institute (IPB) initiated a pilot project to encourage girls to attend school. This project is aimed at the Sahel provinces and its objective is to transform backward zones into more favourable zones in order to increase the low rate of school attendance by girls.

F. Employment context

28. The amendment in 1973 of labour legislation recognizes the principle of the equality of opportunity for men and women as job applicants or as workers.

29. However, factors such as:

- The low rate of school attendance by girls,
- The slow growth in employment in the country (2.7 per cent per year for the public sector and 5.4 per cent for the private sector) (Source: Revues, CEDRES-January 1986),
- Undue male domination of certain jobs,
- Discrimination in the recruitment of women in the private sector,

leave little opportunity for women in the world of employment.

30. For example, in the public sector in Burkina Faso, out of 28,397 wage earners, only 5,868, or 20.66 per cent, are women. (CENATRIN, 20 January 1986).

31. It should be noted however, that for some time a change of attitude towards women in employment has been reflected by the fact that certain male activities are carried out by women.

32. The recruitment by the Civil Service of women for employment normally reserved for men.

33. For example, in 1987, there were four female mechanics, two female masons, female caretakers and several motorized police women.

- The Commando recruitment of women in factories.

34. It should be pointed out that the employment and labour sector is still the least accessible to women.

II. THE ACHIEVEMENTS BROUGHT ABOUT BY THESE MEASURES

35. The various intermediate measures and activities aimed at fostering the participation of Burkina Faso women in national development have resulted in many achievements, including the following:

- The establishment of the Union of Women of Burkina Faso (UFB). This political organization undertakes much work for the benefit of women through mobilization, organization and increased awareness.
- A qualitative change in the attitude of men is gradually taking place: the image of Burkina Faso women restricted to the simple role of good

housewives is beginning to break down. During the Revolution, women showed their abilities, side by side with men, in the great struggle to develop the country (construction of the Ouagadougou-Tambao railway, operation clean towns, development of some of the valleys, etc.).

- The decline in female illiteracy. Between 1985 and 1988, 16,000 women learned to read and write in national languages through various operations (Commando and Bantaaré). This reduced the gap between the illiteracy rates for the male and female populations.

- The creation of new jobs for women: with the Revolution, new jobs were opened to women, as were competitive examinations which they had not been allowed to take (competitive examinations for the Water and Forest Department, or for the Customs Services). The UFB which was behind the training of five women in masonry and 36 women heavy truck drivers also sponsored the recruitment between 1986 and 1987 of:

  - 30 female drivers;

  - 16 factory workers;

  - 82 female masons;

  - 3 female petrol-pump attendants.

36. To this should be added both the creation by the State Secretariat for Social Welfare in 1987 of the Godé cloth mill bringing together 40 weavers (a trade previously considered as a male preserve) and the mass recruitment in 1989 of women in various factories in the country.

- Access of women to credit: the organization of women into village or co-operative groups enabled them to obtain credit on the same terms as men's organizations.

37. Despite the many achievements in the context of the struggle to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, there are still many obstacles delaying the full participation of Burkina Faso women in the development of their country.

III. OBSTACLES TO THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN, ON EQUAL TERMS WITH MEN, IN NATIONAL LIFE

38. Despite the many measures and steps undertaken by the political authorities, various governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations, it must be observed that the contribution of Burkina Faso women to the development of the nation is heavily affected by obstacles of a socio-cultural, health, technical, financial, organizational and institutional nature. The main factors leading to the marginalization of women can be listed:

- Illiteracy curbs a show of initiative by women.

- The reproductive function of women: multiple and frequent pregnancies, as well as domestic chores result in women's work schedules being overloaded.

- Traditional education: since the role of the woman is to be a wife and mother, parents do not see any point in sending girls to school. Traditional education inculcates in girls, from a very young age, their role as good housewives.

- Lack of self-confidence by women: women show little interest in certain studies (science, industry, chemistry).

The force of tradition:

- Certain customs, religious beliefs and retrograde practices among men oppress women and keep them in a perpetual state of "obedient minors". They also have an adverse influence on the social and legal status of women.

- Degrading practices such as forced marriage, excision, dowry and, levirate, contribute to the marginalization of women.

- Lack of organizations providing information for women keeps them in ignorance of their rights.

- Difficulty of access to land: women do not have the same chance of acquiring land in areas where there are allotments, since they are not recognized as heads of family.

- Failure to treat women as co-farmers means that they do not enjoy the benefit of family agricultural income on the same basis as men.

- Marginalization of women in agriculture: agricultural development programmes generally exclude women from organization and training, and from the utilization of modern techniques.

- Lack of organization results in women having difficulty in obtaining credit.

- Lack of labour-saving devices for women (mills, karité presses, carts, etc.) impedes the reconciliation of project activities and their personal occupations.

- Lack of co-ordination between all those working for the benefit of women at national level results in an overlap of their activities, thereby reducing their impact on the status of women.

CONCLUSION

39. Despite inadequate statistics on the status of women, we can say that the socio-economic evolution of women in Burkina Faso, although slow, is quite remarkable. But, compared with the extent of women's needs, the action taken so far remains minimal.

40. The slow pace of improvement of the status of women can be explained in the case of Burkina Faso by the gap between the date of announcement of a measure and its actual implementation.

41. Bearing in mind the high level of illiteracy among the population and the force of tradition on society, the transition period nevertheless enables the institution responsible for applying the measure to conduct a widespread campaign to inform the population and make it more aware.